

Between Two Worlds: How the English Became Americans. By Malcolm Gaskill. (New York: Basic Books, 2014. 512pp. \$35.00).

Malcolm Gaskill's *Between Two Worlds: How the English Became Americans*, aims to more accurately depict the ambitions of English settlers in North America. Intended to simultaneously engage historians interested in Fredrick Jackson Turner's analysis of how frontier life created democratic settlers and lay-readers interested in the colonial beginnings of America, Gaskill demonstrates how the colonists occupy a unique role in English history as harbingers in a strange and foreign world, attempting to nostalgically reconstruct visions of an idealized England they left behind. Relying heavily on letters, diaries, and official records from both the English and American sides of the Atlantic, Gaskill eloquently argues that "rather than embracing new identities, English migrants to America strove to preserve their Englishness, and when they did change, the causes were not exclusively American," (p. 338).

One of Gaskill's greatest accomplishments is his ability to draw together the people of the ostensibly different English colonies and to move seamlessly between the individual colonies in his analysis. By dividing the work chronologically into three sections (Planters: 1607-1640; Saints: 1640-1675; Warriors 1675-1692) he is able to demonstrate how the colonies, mainly in the Chesapeake, Caribbean, and New England, were united in their objective to transplant English culture, albeit an idealized vision that varied between the colonies, to the New World. The first section tells the familiar story of colonial hardship in the first years of settlement. In what is seemingly the least original of the three sections that reads more like a survey of colonization patterns than an analysis of motivations and colonial culture, Gaskill uses the lessons of horror and hardship faced by settlers to demonstrate how colonists, whether it be Virginians after the March 21, 1622 Indian attack or New Englanders recovering from the ravaging August hurricane of 1635, were more alike than different in their courage to settle the unforgiving wilderness. The second, and arguably most intriguing, section of the work employs a wider Atlantic scope by exploring how the tribulations of the English Civil War and the Restoration Period of the mid-seventeenth century reverberated across the English world and forged "a sharper and more strident American identity" among the collective colonies (p.215). Despite allegiances that varied between the colonies during the conflict, Gaskill argues that colonists became united in "their feelings of isolation exacerbated by the sad distractions in England," (p. 162). Lastly, the final section examines how a "robust independent conscious," fostered by England's preoccupation with its own constitutional crisis, grew in the colonies and came into conflict with English ambitions for a commercial empire (p. 358). Gaskill displays how successive generations of English colonists in America were united in their determination to preserve their English identity to the point that this very ambition became their defining characteristic, a quality that would have profound repercussions in the following century.

Gaskill's argument examines the larger Atlantic story of the English colonies in the Americas. While the protagonists are colonists and leading political figures on both sides of the Atlantic, Gaskill also intertwines minority voices that depict the less attractive side of American colonization. The work examines how the colonies, especially those in Virginia and the Caribbean, relied on forced labor imported from Africa in the form of slaves, and forced immigration in the form of indentured servants from Ireland and the lower echelons of English society including the working poor and convicted criminals. Indian policy too remained a constant concern for colonial leaders along the American coast as colonists moved westward. In addition, dissenters, like Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams who challenged Puritan authority

in New England, and Nathaniel Bacon who led colonists in revolt against leaders in Virginia, divided the English colonists among themselves. While the English colonists were united by the desire to preserve their Englishness, the changing demographic, political, and economic landscape of the British Atlantic Empire ensured that their objective could not be achieved, at least not in the ways they imagined.

Gaskill's work incorporates the writing of a vast number of seventeenth-century English colonists, which at times can be dizzying to the reader. He has no qualms about jumping from descriptions given by famous explorers and colonists like John Smith and John Winthrop, to lesser-known characters like George Alsop who emigrated from London due to his dislike for the Puritan regime under Cromwell, or John Higginson who preached against the material culture developing amongst Boston merchants in the 1660s. While the multitude of accounts adds to the comprehensiveness of Gaskill's work, most readers, including trained historians, will certainly find it difficult to remember all the characters from his study, let alone their individual backgrounds and stories. In the same respect, there are a few instances where Gaskill promises to return to a character or story later in the work; however, when the topic is revisited it is often much later and there is little to no indication that the author has returned to a previous subject, as is the case with the 1609 expedition to Jamestown commanded by Christopher Newport and Sir George Somers, and the influence of John Shepard Sr. and John Shepard Jr. in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In many ways Gaskill's history of English colonists and the first century of American colonization is Atlantic in its approach. Rather than depict the colonists as simply the forerunners of the American nation, Gaskill rightfully interprets the colonists as agents of English Atlantic history even asserting that their colonial struggle with "liberty and servitude, authority and allegiance, and true and false religion were at the heart of identity in the Atlantic," (p. 338). However, the inclusion of a comparative analysis could illuminate how English colonization differed from or replicated that of other European powers like France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. In describing English emigration, Gaskill comes tantalizing close to drawing such a comparison asserting, "America lacked the pull factor for French peasants and the Dutch, who had it too good at home, lacked the push," but does not answer these questions (p. 232). Gaskill's work may pave the way for future Atlantic historians to elaborate on not only the differences in colonization patterns among the European nations, but also, what these differences meant for the colonists and the way they perceived themselves in relation to the mother country.

G. Patrick O'Brien
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina